

TENNESSEE SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

Oakleaf Cottage

Chattanooga, TN (area) | Travel & Tourism

Oakleaf Cottage is an event space and wedding venue located in Trenton, Georgia in the greater Chattanooga area. Oakleaf Cottage sits on 32 acres and is ideal for smaller events of around 100 guests. Situated on Lookout Mountain in Georgia, Oakleaf Cottage recognizes their close connection to nature and the outdoors and strives to implement sustainable practices as a part of their events and weddings. In fact, Oakleaf Cottage is actively working with the GreenLight program administered by green|spaces in Chattanooga and is certified as a green venue. Some of their sustainability initiatives include energy conservation by using LED lightbulbs, water conservation by collecting rainwater and installing low-flow fixtures, and they have partnered with New Terra Compost to have all food waste rendered into useable compost.



WASTE REDUCTION



Oakleaf Cottage has an ambitious goal for their weddings – to only produce **one** bag of trash after every event. With such an ambitious goal, it was important for staff at Oakleaf Cottage to understand their waste stream generated by events, research how to best eliminate waste from that stream, and implement practices that prioritize reuse or recycling of products. Now, events use real plates and glassware instead of plasticware for serving food, food waste is collected and composted off-site, there is abundant recycling of glass, aluminum, cardboard, mixed paper, and plastic (1 and 2), and staff request that food caterers utilize reusable dishes rather than disposable to limit waste generated from catered food. For weddings, Oakleaf Cottage requires biodegradable materials, rather than non-biodegradable materials such as confetti, are used for send-offs. These materials include biodegradable confetti, seeds, leaves, or real flower petals.

Oakleaf Cottage is looking to constantly improve their practices to continue reducing waste generated from their events. For example, they plan to include fabric napkins in most wedding packages in 2022. For those weddings that cannot use fabric napkins, Oakleaf Cottage will use paper napkins with the intention to compost those napkins after they are used.

WATER & ENERGY CONSERVATION

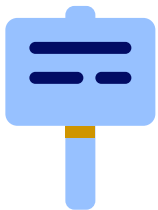


Recognizing that waste is not the only environmental burden associated with events, Oakleaf Cottage also implements practices that reduce their water and energy usage to promote environmental sustainability. To conserve water, Oakleaf Cottage has installed low flow water features (showerheads, toilets, and sinks) across their property. Also on the property, staff have installed drip irrigation systems to water landscaped features, which uses an estimated 30% to 65% less water than traditional irrigation systems. Of course, Oakleaf Cottage also prioritizes native plants which reduces the amount of water required for landscaping efforts. Finally, water is collected in a rain barrel to irrigate some plants on the property. Oakleaf Cottage has plans to expand the rainwater collection system directly into their drip irrigation lines.



The business has taken many steps to reduce their energy usage onsite. These steps include updating light bulbs – all but one! – to LED and only using lights during showings or active events, monitoring thermostats to note abuse of HVAC and adjust accordingly if needed, and setting the HVAC to 79 in the summer and 55 in the winter if spaces are unoccupied to reduce usage of the HVAC unit. Oakleaf Cottage also has installed occupancy sensors to automatically turn lights on and off strategically on their property to limit accidental unneeded lights on. Appliances at the property were also selected to conserve energy, including a tankless water heater, an energy efficient refrigerator, and dishwashers that conserve energy and water.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION



Along with their other initiatives, Oakleaf Cottage provides a welcome packet and planning guide to couples to support their ability to plan a greener wedding. Included in this packet is a page of Chattanooga Green-Light certified vendor and other advice for planning a wedding with a reduced environmental impact. By providing this information to couples, Oakleaf Cottage is lowering barriers to those who are interested in a green wedding. Oakleaf Cottage is also supporting their community by referring customers to other local businesses that have taken steps to be responsible environmental stewards.